

*"Ut omnes unum sint"*

# THE ANNUAL CALL OF THE Church Unity Octave

In collaboration with the C.U.O. Committee in America

EIGHT DAYS OF PRAYER  
FOR REUNION — 1953

From the Feast of St. Peter's Chair at Rome, January 18th, to the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle of the Nations, January 25th.

"I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one: that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them even as thou lovedst me."

S. John xvii, 23.

It is only by the reunion of all Christians into the Visible Kingdom of Christ, preserved in Unity by the Chair of St. Peter, the central See of Christendom at Rome, that the will of Our Lord can be fulfilled and that the power of the Church can be directed, without the present waste and rivalry, to the conversion of the whole world by One Faith to Christ our King.

The movement toward Church Unity, as it is variously understood in the religious world of today, exhibits two distinct tendencies. These differences in trend chiefly depend upon where the emphasis is laid in the desire for union. If the principal emphasis is upon the necessity of a united Christian front against the onslaught of modern materialism, the approach to the problem is utilitarian: if on the other hand, it is upon the necessity of realizing the Will of Our Lord, the approach is theological.

In the first case, the validity of Christian experience in the separated bodies is postulated and the tendency is toward finding a broad agreed basis for a union in which the varied experiences of the different bodies will contribute to the fulness of the new united church so created. Of necessity, in such a context the church is regarded rather as an institution than as the Body of Christ. Though the term "re-union" is commonly used in connection with the aim of this tendency, the term "union" is much more appropriate. Generally speaking, it is a modern movement, called into being by modern conditions and therein lies both its strength and its weakness; its strength in that it promises a Christian reaction to a present and realized menace, its weakness in that it is impatient of uncompromising beliefs which delay its goal.



## DIVINELY ONE

In the second case, where the approach is theological, the necessity for the Unity of the Godhead being mirrored in the Church postulates an existing unity which is theologically self-sufficient; and also existing schisms which can only be resolved by incorporation into that unity. Redemption is seen as an adoption into the Divine Unity. The Eternal Word takes Flesh into union with Himself in the womb of the Ever-Blessed Virgin Mary and redeems humanity on Calvary. The Church, as the Body of Christ, is the instrument of this redemptive act operating in space and time and incorporating individuals into the unity of the Body which is thus seen to be a living organism originating in the Incarnation and Atonement. Of necessity, the continuity of this organism cannot be broken since it originated in an action, absolutely essential to its being, which had a specific beginning and which cannot be repeated. The continuity of the Church, therefore, is manifested in history, and separations from the visible unity are schisms which can only be repaired according to the degree of schism either by a corporate return to that unity or in the case of protestants, by a return to this fundamental conception. To these two processes, the terms "reunion" and "conversion" are respectively applied. This is no modern movement for it has been in operation from the days of the Great Schism between East and West, and in England, indeed, ever since the Reformation.

The Roman Catholic Church not only claims an unbroken continuity from Apostolic times but, also, in the Chair of Peter she possesses a Divinely-appointed centre of unity and, although Papal claims in the past may have been extended to an excess in the temporal sphere, that fact in no wise diminishes the force of the purely spiritual authority. As far as the Church of England is concerned, there is no gain—saying the fact that she owes her existence to Rome, that for 1500 years she accepted the spiritual jurisdiction of the successors of St. Peter and that she was forcibly torn from her Unity with the Holy See by the action of the state and its self-willed monarch.

## HOLY

But Unity is but one mark of the Church. She is also Holy, Catholic and Apostolic and, whilst the Church in her perfection possesses all four characteristics in their fulness, it is possible for separated bodies to possess some measure of each or even of all. For example, a body forced into schism by the secular power as in the case of the Church of England, might never formally deny the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope and, in more favourable times, an open acknowledgment of that jurisdiction might well manifest itself in her midst and attempts be made to heal the breach. This, certainly, represents what has happened in the Church of England. Similarly, with the mark of holiness, so long as any channel of grace remains open, some measure of this characteristic can manifest itself. Now, the Church is holy because she is the Body of Christ and thus partakes of His sanctity, and this sanctity of the Body of Christ manifests itself in greater or lesser degree in individual members in accordance with their use of the sanctifying grace of the Body available



to them. It is necessary, of course, to emphasize that this sanctity is essentially Christian. The holiness of a Buddhist or the goodness of an atheist are of a different kind and quality. Nevertheless, the peculiar virtues of Christian sanctity have manifested themselves in bodies separated from the Church. This fact is recognized in the whole movement toward Church Unity, whether the objective is sought in the creation of a new union or is sought in re-integration into the existing Church of Christ; and it is important that it should be recognized for it supplies the basis for what is still **the most important factor** in all efforts to realize Unity—the factor of prayer. The outstanding characteristic of Christian sanctity is devotion to the Person of Our Lord and such devotion can call forth a volume of effective prayer that the Holy Spirit will direct all our efforts to the accomplishment of the Lord's Own purpose in the realization of that Unity which He has willed for His Church. If we are to avoid the sin of Judas—the attempt to force upon the Divine Master a specific reaction to the external circumstances of the world—prayer and patience must go hand-in-hand with the assurance that to those who ask faithfully and in humility all will be granted.

### CATHOLIC

Where the Church is regarded as an organism existing to accomplish the purposes of redemption, emphasis is laid upon her **catholicity**. This involves the possession of the one Faith once delivered to the saints. Without this Faith in its fulness, unity is an impossibility. This follows since the Christian life—the attainment of the measure of the fulness of the stature of Christ—whether in the Church or in the individual is a translation of the Faith into the action of living. A vital necessity, therefore, in the effort toward reunion is full dogmatic agreement. As the present Archbishop of Canterbury has pointed out, the Church of England has no doctrines of her own. She accepts the Catholic Faith and it is a matter of history that she has never formally rejected that Faith. Unfortunately, the peculiar circumstances of her severance from the unity of the Holy See and the intrusion of Puritanism with no more than an apparent conformity have tended to obscure her traditional beliefs and, at one time, almost succeeded in robbing her of her Catholic inheritance. That inheritance the Catholic Movement has reclaimed but the reclamation is only complete when doctrinal agreement with the primary See of Christendom is acknowledged. To be sure, the Roman position requires clarification on some points but that is no real barrier to full dogmatic agreement.

### UTILITARIAN

In contra-distinction to this, in the **utilitarian** approach there is a tendency to soften the lines of demarcation between differing beliefs and to establish an acceptable compromise. In its more extreme form this tendency expressed itself in the South India scheme and, in almost similar measure, it can be seen in the North India proposals. However, there are encouraging signs that this extreme is giving place to a more cautious approach. Something of this is seen in some recent non-Conformist comments on the Cambridge sermon by the Archbishop of Canterbury, for in these comments the necessity for doctrinal agreement is put



forward. Compromise might be necessary in a secular democracy where differing opinions can be equally tolerable but in the Church there can be but one truth since God is Truth and He is One. The Church has a definite mission and a definite work in the scheme of redemption and she can accomplish neither with anything less than a definite Faith. A "united front" becomes a mere facade unless it can present a single, authoritative Christian Faith as an unanswerable reply to the materialistic philosophies of today.

### APOSTOLIC

The remaining mark of the Church is her **Apostolicity**. In this is bound up the perpetuation of the Apostolic tradition, practice and fellowship. The Apostles were the eyewitnesses of Our Lord's Ministry: to them was given the commission to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. To the chief of the Apostles, St. Peter, was given the power of the keys, the power of binding and loosing. When these commissions are considered against the background of the Jewish Church with its Divinely-appointed Priesthood, the Messianic Hope and the age-long mission of the Christian Church, it is idle to argue that they were personal gifts expiring with the Apostles themselves. The very nature of the case demanded their inheritance by their successors so that, in all ages, the true tradition could be guaranteed together with the Sacraments necessary to salvation. The Apostolic Ministry in succession from the Apostles is essential to the sacramental life of the Church. It is necessary, however, to recognize that the power of binding and loosing, of defining the true content of the Faith, is inherent in the whole Church, is committed to the Episcopate and is the particular prerogative of the successor of St. Peter. This means that the purely personal opinions of a Pope, a Bishop or even of a group of Bishops, however honestly advocated, have no binding authority in themselves. It is only in his official capacity as Pastor of the Church, after consultation with the Episcopate and after giving full consideration to the belief and practice of the Church throughout the ages, that the Pope can define a dogma of the Church. His infallibility in matters of Faith and Morals is that with which Our Lord has endowed His Church. Something more, therefore, than the mere acceptance of episcopacy is necessary for the realization of the full content of Apostolicity. Even a perfectly valid Apostolic Succession does not, in itself, guarantee much more than valid Sacraments. That the Apostolic Ministry is essential to the life of the Church and is not merely a good or even the best system has the weight of centuries of tradition behind it, it agrees with the New Testament description of the Church and it fulfils all that is required in the perpetuation of the benefits of the Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection and Pentecost in the living Church. Yet, despite all this, it remains stultified in proportion to the lack of the full content of the other three distinguishing features of the Church.

A vision of unity which falls short of the inclusion of the great Latin Church of the West and the Orthodox Churches of the East is no true goal for effort and, if a "united Christian front" is aimed at, it



is the last thing which should be tolerated. Indeed, retaining as she does the centre of unity in the Apostolic See, the Roman Catholic Church already possesses the very Unity for which others strive. True there are barriers which she could remove by explanation but there is much we must accomplish before we can well hope for reciprocal action. As loyal members of *Ecclesia Anglicana*, we claim to have retained an Apostolic Ministry in valid succession and the ancient Catholic Faith. We can dare to claim to manifest some proof of the flowering of that sanctity which is of the very nature of the Church and we even claim some measure of the essence of unity since in our midst can be found not only the desire for its full realization but, also, some recognition of the primacy of the Roman See, of the spiritual jurisdiction of the Successor of St. Peter and of the great debt that we owe to the Holy Father Gregory who gave to us the Faith which we uphold today. Our way thus lies plain before us. It is not the way dictated by the exigencies of the present situation, for in that way lies the danger of losing all we have preserved. Rather is it the ancient way, the way of corporate return to the full measure of the unity which our church once enjoyed but from which she was forcibly severed. Since it is a way and not a short cut, prayer remains of vital import, so we appeal for participation in the Octave of Prayer for Reunion. Can we depend, too, upon your support of the dogmatic position of the Church Unity Octave Council, summarised as follows:

- (1) The conversion of the world depends upon the Visible Unity of the Church of God, for our Saviour prayed, "That they all may be one . . . that the World may believe."
- (2) He provided the means for the maintenance of this Unity by the appointment of a visible head of the visible Body: "Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church." History has shown what interpretation the Church has given to this text, for none other has ever been the Church's acknowledged head upon earth but he who sits on Peter's Throne. Separation from this centre of Unity has always led the separated into further schisms, while acknowledgement of it by all must necessarily result in the healing of all divisions.
- (3) The dogmatic decrees that concern the supremacy of St. Peter's successor and his infallibility in Faith and Morals, while not capable of being rescinded even by the Pope himself, do nevertheless admit of elucidation and further definition such as would make their general acceptance by the Catholic-minded inevitable.
- (4) Further, it may be hoped that many vital and important matters left over at the Vatican Council, such as those concerning the mystical nature of the Church, will eventually be considered and issue in such definitions as may bring out the true balance of the doctrine concerning the relationship between the successor of St. Peter and the rest of the Apostolic Episcopate and the body of the Faithful.

To these premises we invite all priests to signify entire support by sending in their signatures to the Secretary, Mr. R. L. Elderton, Egdean, Fittleworth, Pulborough, Sussex.



## DAILY INTENTIONS

- Jan. 18.—**St. Peter's Chair at Rome.** The return of all the "other sheep" to the "One flock, under one Shepherd."
- „ 19.—Reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches.
- „ 20.—The repairing of the 16th century breach between England and Rome.
- „ 21.—The return of Lutheran and other European Protestants to Holy Church.
- „ 22.—The return of all dissenters to Holy Church.
- „ 23.—The return to the Holy Sacraments of lapsed Catholics.
- „ 24.—The Conversion of the Jews and Moslems.
- „ 25.—**Conversion of St. Paul.** The Missionary conquest of the whole world for Christ the King.

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